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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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SUBJECT: TURKS BITTER, RESIGNED AS EU DELIBERATES - "IT'S UP TO EUROPE"

Classified by CDA Nancy McEldowney; reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (U) Summary: Turkish leaders across the political spectrum displayed wounded pride and bitter resignation on the eve of the planned October 3 start of EU accession talks.

Turkey has done its part, PM Erdogan and FM Gul stressed; the decision now rests with the EU. The public mood has turned sour and pessimistic. Tens of thousands of Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) supporters attended an anti-EU rally in Ankara; opposition leaders accused the GOT of mishandling the EU process. Domestic pressure is mounting on the government and Turkish patience has run out. End Summary.

Turkey Has Met Its Obligations; Now It Is Europe's Turn

¶2. (U) Across official circles, the mood is one of defiance, pride and resignation:

--PM Erdogan asserted to an AKP gathering on October 2 that Turkey has met all its obligations as an EU candidate. The EU is now "taking a test." The EU's handling of Turkey's candidacy, per Erdogan, will determine whether the organization "will become a global actor or remain a Christian club." Turkey's future, the PM stated, does not depend on the EU -- Turkey will not deviate from the path of democracy, human rights, and freedom regardless of decisions taken by the EU -- it will "turn the Copenhagen criteria into the Ankara criteria". FM Gul, too, emphasized that the GOT has met its obligations; Turkey, he said would not accept any proposed outcome other than full membership.

--Speaker of Parliament Arinc told MPs at the October 1 official opening of Parliament that Turkey will not sacrifice its pride for EU membership. "An agreement or a condition that would stain the honorable history of this nation would never be approved by this Parliament," he intoned. Arinc averred that the Turkish public has a hard time understanding the "double standard" the EU applies to Turkey. He also harshly criticized the European Parliament for calling on Turkey to recognize the Armenian "genocide," a crime that Turkey "did not commit."

--President Sezer, also speaking at Parliament's opening session, averred that the EU contains "walls of prejudice" and maintained that any delay in Turkey's accession negotiations would be a loss more for the EU than for Turkey.

"The Turkish nation will not accept introduction of additional conditions or discrimination," Sezer said. "The process has reached an irreversible stage. Turkey is determined to become an EU member and it will do so by protecting its national interests and national pride."

Two Anti-EU Rallies Held, Pro-EU Rally Postponed

¶3. (U) A different face of defiance showed itself at an October 2 MHP anti-EU rally in Ankara, attended by tens of thousands -- the press estimated attendance at 70,000. MHP President Bahceli bitterly criticized the AKP government's EU policy, labeling it "treason." He asserted that the opening of EU accession talks would mark the "consequence of the AKP policy of surrender." Approximately 3,000 supporters attended an October 2 anti-EU rally in Istanbul organized by the Turkish Communist Party.

¶4. (SBU) Meanwhile, authorities postponed a pro-EU rally scheduled for October 2 in Diyarbakir, the largest city in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish and overwhelmingly EU-friendly southeast, reportedly because of a scheduling conflict with an industrial fair. AMCON Adana contacts, worried that nationalist, anti-EU sentiment is on the rise, were suspicious of the governor's decision, noting that the MHP was permitted to hold its anti-EU event in Ankara.

Opposition Points Finger at AKP

¶5. (C) Egemen Bagis, MP from the ruling AK Party (AKP) and translator for Erdogan, told us October 2 that he is

concerned about the mounting domestic pressure on AKP for its EU policy, not just from MHP. He pointed to increasingly strident criticism from both the left-center Republican People's Party (CHP) and the center-right True Path Party (DYP). DYP leader Agar accused the GOT publicly of mishandling the EU process; Turkey, he said, cannot begin negotiations under unfair conditions. CHP Vice Chairman Oymen emphasized that Turkey will neither accept "privileged partnership" as an alternative to full membership nor "make concessions" to the EU.

Markets React Nervously

¶16. (U) Turkish financial markets fell October 3 amidst uncertainties about the EU process. At 10:30 a.m. Ankara time, after an hour of trading, the stock exchange had fallen 1.75 percent, the yield on the benchmark May 9, 2007 bond was up from 15.05 percent at the close September 30 to 15.20 percent, and the Turkish lira had fallen from 1.3487 to the dollar to 1.3635. The initial take of some market analysts was that they expect the EU to work out a solution, suggesting the sell-off will accelerate if the EU news worsens.

Comment: Turkish Patience Has Run Out

¶17. (C) Turkish pride, which always runs high, has been a complicating factor in Turkey's EU candidacy. Turks tend to view EU-mandated reforms as "concessions", especially in these last, emotion-laden weeks. The Turks have reached the limits of their patience, and are in no mood to accept any new conditions.

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